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Views of Primary Education Teachers on the Effectiveness of the Use of Experiential Participatory Methods in the Teaching Context of the Hosting Classes

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Abstract

This paper explores the perceptions of a sample of teachers as far as the teaching of experiential, participatory educational techniques to foreign pupils is concerned. The sample of the survey consisted of 50 teachers of primary schools throughout Greece while the data were collected through a questionnaire. Based on the findings gathered, conclusions are drawn on the cognitive and empirical background of the sample, on the use of techniques, as well as its perceptions on their effectiveness, the difficulties of their application and their training in them. In particular, the survey results show that almost all teachers had formed a good cognitive background about these techniques, but there is a need for further training and modernization of their knowledge on teaching. Finally, further discussion on the issues can be accomplished under study.

Keywords: Host Classes, Refugees, Experiential Participatory Educational Techniques

1. Introduction

The 'New School,' means creating an educational environment accessible to all pupils as well as equal educational opportunities, irrespective of gender, age, their ethnic and cultural origin, their socio-economic background, their religion and other similar personal characteristics (Kourkoutas, 2010).

In contemporary teaching, teachers are faced with a great challenge; the management of multicultural classes, including students with different cultural identities and speaking a different language from the official, taught at school. The arrival of refugee populations, a phenomenon that has taken place extensively in our country in recent years, makes it imperative to reformulate the educational system and modernize intercultural education (Palaiologou & Evangelou, 2003).

In Greece, the establishment of structures for intercultural education has been legally established since the early years of the political transition aiming to meet the educational needs of repatriated students (Nicholas, 2005). In the modern school and in our country (Matsangouras, 2007a, 2007b), teachers are asked to abandon traditional

teaching methods and apply techniques that promote, among other things, experiential learning (Dewey, 1980, Isted, 1938). Experiential, participatory educational techniques are some teaching tools that can be used for this purpose.

1.1 Defining interculturality

The term "interculturality" refers to the interaction of two or more national and/or cultural groups that coexist in a particular social environment. This interaction is also linked to the socialization process of individuals, that is the process of integration into society (Chrysochoou, 2011).

1.2 Intercultural education

Intercultural education is considered essential, and among other things, aims at supporting the smooth coexistence of various ethnic-cultural groups and the social integration of newly arrived populations, providing equal educational opportunities for all and promoting the cultivation of respect towards diversity (Palaiologou & Evangelou, 2003; Trilianos, 2006).

1.3 Intercultural and multicultural education

The term "intercultural" refers to a constructive process of recognizing people's diversity, overcoming the boundaries of each cultural group, and interacting with each other. On the contrary, the term "multicultural" refers to the mere coexistence of different cultural groups in a particular space.

1.4 Five basic educational models of multicultural - intercultural education (Govaris, 2001; Mark, 2011).

- The "assimilation model" promotes the assimilation of the minority group, (the refugees), by the dominant group. In addition to linguistic assimilation of these groups, by forcing them to learn only the official language of the host country in school, minority groups also suffer cultural homogeneity. This is firstly promoted through the non-systematic learning of their mother tongue in the school environment as a key element of their national identity. As a result, foreign pupils are forced to abandon other basic cultural elements, such as religion, and are expected to initiate behavioural norms similar to those followed by the native population.
- In the "integration model," the cultural diversity of the refugees seems to be accepted since it does not contradict the prevailing cultural ideologies. New concepts, such as mutual tolerance, cultural equality, and the teaching of official language as the second one with respect to the native language of foreigners, are found within this particular model. (Nikolaou, 2000). However, the parity between the groups seems to be promoted only at a theoretical level. First, foreign students are expected to accept the dominant culture, which again leads to their cultural inferiority. Respectively, the native population is expected to accept, to a certain extent, some minor characteristics of the minority group. Lastly, although equal educational opportunities for all are sought, something similar is not practical, since foreign pupils start from a different linguistic and cultural background compared to the others
- The "multicultural model"; the value of multiculturalism in a society is progressively recognized and aims to enable future generations to function in multicultural environments formed at national and/or global level (Bullivant, 1997). Therefore, efforts are being made to provide equal educational opportunities for all, taking into account the particular linguistic and cultural characteristics of foreign pupils. Among the educational policies of the model are various programs for foreign pupils to learn the official language of the host country as their second language, their mother tongue as well as the inclusion of multicultural dimensions in the curriculum for creative interaction among all groups (Mark, 2010).

- The "anti-racist model" focuses on limiting any discrimination against specific groups of students. Equal educational and social opportunities for all regardless of their ethnic, racial, and cultural identity and the fight against racism through culture are just some of the principles of this model. (Georgogiannis 1999; Tsiakalos, 2000). One of the aims of implementing such an educational model is to combat the exploitation of minority and/or weaker groups, both in the school environment and in society. Among other things, the model promotes the use of an "oppositional language" with racism-related concepts, which are commonplace in areas outside the educational context and, in particular, the political field; struggle, oppression, and power are just some of them (Gillborn, 1990).
- Today, the 'intercultural model' seems to promote interaction, equality, mutual acceptance, mutual respect, and cooperation among different cultural groups. This model is based on four basic principles: (a) empathy; (b) solidarity; (c) respect for cultural diversity; and (d) the elimination of nationalist thinking and prejudices (Georgogiannis, 1999). The intercultural approach promotes, among other things, the provision of equal educational opportunities and the principles of equality and recognition. In particular, it encourages the use of linguistic, cultural, and other differences among pupils (eg, religious) as a fertile ground for learning (Damanakis, 1997; Markou, 1997). In order for foreign students to experience the climate of acceptance, the teaching of their mother tongue seems to play - among other educational practices - a key role.

2. Research Methodology

2.1 Purpose

The purpose of this research is to investigate the perceptions of teachers teaching foreign pupils in Primary Schools about the use of experiential, participatory educational techniques. In particular, the following objectives as follows:

- (1) The development of the knowledge and empirical background of the participants regarding the use - or not - of the above techniques.
- (2) To examine their perceptions of the effectiveness of these techniques.
- (3) To raise their views on the causes of their difficulty.
- (4) Their attitudes regarding training in the above techniques.
- (5) The relationships between the perceptions of the participants in the above factors and their demographic characteristics.

2.2 Research questions

The conclusions of this work are drawn based on the following research questions:

- (1) Are the views of Primary Education Teachers on the knowledge of participatory learning techniques dependent on their demographic characteristics?
- (2) Are the views of Primary Education Teachers on the effective implementation of experiential, participatory educational techniques dependent on their demographic characteristics?
- (3) Are the views of Primary Education Teachers on the difficulties they encounter in the implementation of experiential, participatory educational techniques dependent on their demographic characteristics?
- (4) Are the views of Primary Education Teachers on the need to train them in the use of experiential, participatory teaching techniques dependent on their demographic characteristics?

2.3 The sample

In the present study, fifty (50) teachers working in the Primary Schools participated. Most participants were women aged between 25 and 35, having a service of more than 10 years and a postgraduate diploma.

2.4 Data collection

In the present study, a structured questionnaire of 34 questions was used. This questionnaire consists of thirty-four questions, including questions about events (Vamboukas, 1998). Ten of them correspond to demographic data (sex, age, marital status, years of teaching experience, workplace, type of public school, postgraduate or other studies) and the rest refer to four factors: the cognitive and empirical background of respondents about specific experiential, participatory educational techniques, the effectiveness of teaching these techniques, the causes of the difficulties in their application and the teachers' training in specific techniques. Given that this is a sample survey based on a standard questionnaire characterized by stability and coherence, it has given the prospect of reaching a part of the population in order to test the theoretical data. Consequently, the results derived from a sufficient number of teachers, and for this reason, the cases have been theoretically formulated and subjected to rigorous and valid control.

In order to formulate the content of the questions, the contribution of relevant references on experiential, participatory educational techniques, and experiential learning was important. In addition, the prevailing conditions in the Hosting Classes were taken into account in accordance with the official educational policy texts, which in the current period support refugees in many regions. Finally, the official educational material available to teachers is a factor that has been taken into account when formulating the content of the questions.

2.5 Limitations of the research

This research is limited by specific elements based on the research purpose, formulation, and control of research questions, as well as the sample of participants/teachers. These methodological constraints and delimitations are identified in the following key points:

- The cognitive background and the perceptions of the participating teachers on specific experiential, participatory educational techniques were studied.
- Their perceptions on specific issues related to the teaching of these techniques (difficulty in applying, effectiveness, and training) were examined.
- The survey involved a certain number of teachers, which amounted to fifty (50) people. Consequently, the conclusions are not generalizable.
- Participating teachers were taught in Hosting Classes during the school year 2018 - 2019 to non-Greek pupils and in particular to refugees, mainly from Arab-speaking countries.
- A questionnaire constructed in the context of this paper was used to collect the data and not another research method (eg, interview).

2.6 Data analysis

During the statistical analysis of the survey data, the frequencies (f) and the percentages (f%) of the answers per category (Field, 2009) were calculated for the examination of the specific research questions. The statistical analysis of the data was done with the statistical package Statistical Package for Social Sciences 23 for Windows 7.

2.7 Validity and credibility of research

Given that this is a sample survey based on a standard questionnaire characterized by stability and coherence, the prospect of reaching a part of the population in order to test the theoretical data was given. Therefore, the results

are the result of a sufficient number of teachers, and for this reason, the cases have been theoretically formulated and subjected to rigorous and valid control.

3. Results

3.1 Demographic characteristics

The distribution of the sample in relation to the demographic characteristics is as follows:

- **Gender:** From the sample of 50 educators surveyed, 12 (24%) were men, and 38 (76%) were women.
- **Age:** 40 (80%) belong to the age group 25-35, 6 (12%) to the age group 36-45 and 4 (8%) are between 46-55.
- **Marital status:** 30 (60%) were single, 19 (38%) were married and 1 (2%) divorced.
- **Teaching Experience:** 20 (40%) have 10 years of teaching experience, 20 (40%) less than 10 years and 10 have more than 10 years of experience (20%).
- **Basic studies and further training of the participants:** The total number of teachers, who participated in the research possess a university degree (100%). 33 (66%) hold a postgraduate diploma, 1 holds Ph.D. degree (2%), and 16 (32%) teachers have completed other studies.

Table 1. Sample distribution in relation to gender, age, marital status, teaching experience, and further studies.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Gender					
Valid	Man	12	24.0	24.0	24.0
	Woman	38	76.0	76.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	
Age					
Valid	25-35	40	80.0	80.0	80.0
	36-45	6	12.0	12.0	92.0
	46-55	4	8.0	8.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	
Marital Status					
Valid	Single	30	60.0	60.0	60.0
	Married	19	38.0	38.0	98.0
	Divorced	1	2.0	2.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	
Teaching Experience					
Valid	10 years	20	40.0	40.0	40.0
	Less than 10 years	20	40.0	40.0	80.0
	More than 10 years	10	20.0	20.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	
Further Studies					
Valid	Postgraduate diploma	33	66.0	66.0	66.0
	Ph.D. Degree	1	2.0	2.0	68.0
	Other studies	16	32.0	32.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

3.2 Frequencies of the questionnaire scales

3.2.1 Frequencies of the scale "Knowledge of experiential participatory educational techniques."

Regarding the experiential participatory educational techniques, the teachers stated that they know:

- workgroups (98%)
- brainstorming (96%)
- role play (96%)
- case study (82%)
- questions-answers (94%)
- simulation (70%)
- demonstration (62%)

Table 2: Knowledge of educational techniques

Educational techniques	Frequency	Percent
Workgroups	48	98%
Brainstorming	49	96%
Roleplay	48	96 %
Case study	41	82%
Questions answers	47	94%
Simulation	35	70%
Demonstration	31	62%

The experiential participatory educational techniques that teachers have used in the Hosting Classes:

- workgroups (74%)
- brainstorming (70%)
- role play (72%)
- case study (40%)
- questions-answers (76%)
- simulation (28%)
- demonstration (38%)

Table 3: Implementation of educational techniques

Educational techniques	Frequency	Percent
Workgroups	35	70%
Brainstorming	37	74%
Roleplay	36	72 %
Case study	20	40%
Questions answers	38	76%
Simulation	14	28%
Demonstration	19	38%

The causes of not implementing the experiential participatory educational techniques are:

- Students' language background (24%)
- Unsuitability (16%)
- Difficulties in applying the techniques (10%)
- Lack of teaching time (10%)
- Lack of materials (8%)
- Poor knowledge (6%)
- Unnecessary (4%)
- Unable to fit the curriculum (2%)
- Did not occur (2%)
- I have used them all (10%)
- I do not know/do not answer (8%)

Table 4: Causes of not implementing the techniques

Causes	Frequency	Percent
Students' language background	12	24%
Unsuitability	8	16%
Difficulties in applying the techniques	5	10%
Lack of teaching time	5	10%
Lack of materials	4	8%
Poor knowledge	3	6%
Unnecessary	2	4%
Unable to fit the curriculum	1	2%
Did not occur	1	2%

3.2.2 Frequencies of the scale "Effectiveness of application of experiential participatory educational techniques."

Table 5: Fields where the techniques are applied

	Very much	Much	A little	Little	Not at all
The objectives of teaching are achieved:	14%	36%	44%	6%	0%
The quality of teaching improves:	22%	36%	36%	6%	0%
The role of teachers changes:	22%	36%	36%	6%	0%
Modern learning principles are applied:	16%	40%	36%	6%	2%
The pupils' special characteristics are boosted:	20%	40%	38%	2%	0%
The pupils' educational needs are satisfied:	18%	38%	42%	2%	0%
The effectiveness of teaching intervention is achieved:	18%	38%	42%	2%	0%
Internal school reform is achieved:	10%	32%	28%	28%	2%

3.2.3 Frequencies of the scale "Difficulties in the application of experiential participatory educational techniques."

Table 6: The relation between the difficulties of the techniques and specific fields

	Very much	Much	A little	Little	Not at all
The difficulties are related to the lack of theoretical knowledge in relation to the advantages of their application:	2%	22%	24%	36%	16%
The difficulties are related to the lack of theoretical knowledge in relation to the disadvantages of their application:	2%	22%	24%	34%	18%
The difficulties are related to the lack of theoretical knowledge in relation to the standards of proper implementation:	4%	16%	44%	24%	12%

The difficulties are related to the lack of practical knowledge regarding their effective implementation:	4%	16%	44%	24%	12%
The difficulties are related to the lack of suitable venues for their effective implementation:	28%	46%	20%	4%	2%
The difficulties are related to the lack of appropriate educational tools:	30%	38%	22%	8%	2%

3.2.4 Frequencies of the scale "Training Primary Education Teachers to use experiential participatory educational techniques."

Regarding the necessity of training, 92% of the teachers answered positively, and 8% not.

The reasons why they need training are:

- The importance of training (26%)
- Better application of experiential techniques (24%)
- Desire to learn new techniques (14%)
- Meaning of experiential techniques (12%)
- Insufficient knowledge (8%)
- Better training (4%)
- Unable to handle situations in Host Classes (2%)
- Difficulty in experiential techniques (2%)
- I do not know/do not answer (2%)

Table 7: Causes of teachers' attitudes towards their training in the use of experiential participatory educational techniques.

Reasons	Frequency	Percent
The importance of training	13	26%
Better application of experiential techniques	12	24%
Desire to learn new techniques	7	14%
Importance of experiential techniques	6	12%
Insufficient knowledge	4	8%
Better training	2	4%
Unable to handle situations in Host Classes	1	2%
Difficulty in experiential techniques	1	2%
I do not know/do not answer	1	2%

The reasons why they do not need training are:

- Sufficient knowledge (4%)
- Techniques depending on educational environments (2%)

Table 8: Causes of teachers' attitudes towards their training in the use of experiential participatory educational techniques.

Reasons	Frequency	Percent
Sufficient knowledge	2	4%
Techniques depending on educational environments	1	2%

With regard to training issues, the teachers stated the following topics:

- Practical application of techniques (46%)
- Teaching issues (20%)
- Teaching Greek as a foreign language (12%)
- Extending general knowledge (8%)
- Multiculturalism - Identity of the "Other" (6%)
- Refugee human rights (4%)
- I do not know/do not answer (4%)

Table 9: Sample distribution of the preferred topics of its training

Education Topics	Frequency	Percent
Practical application of techniques	23	46%
Teaching issues	10	20%
Teaching Greek as a foreign language	6	12%
Extending general knowledge	4	8%
Multiculturalism - Identity of the "Other"	3	6%
Refugee human rights	2	4%
I do not know/do not answer	2	4%

4. Discussion

According to the responses of the teachers who participated in the present study, it was revealed that almost all had formed a good cognitive background about experiential participatory educational techniques. More than half of the respondents were aware of the majority and/or all of the techniques included in the questionnaire (brainstorming, work groups, role play, case study, questions-answers, simulation, and demonstration). These findings are likely to be related to some demographics in the sample, such as age, teaching experience, and level of study. Focusing on the experiential participatory educational techniques, working groups seemed to be the predominant ones. This particular finding is likely to be related to the systematic promotion of group cooperative teaching methods in Primary School in all cognitive subjects.

Despite the fact that more than half of the teachers consider it easy to apply the experiential participatory educational techniques according to a relevant question, the percentage that they said they apply them, is decreasing compared to what they said they knew. The predominant cause of not applying the techniques in the Host Classes is the different linguistic background of their pupils. Indeed, in the Legislative Framework for Hosting Classes, there is no provision of an interpreter throughout teaching that could facilitate communication between teachers and foreign pupils. In addition, translation software is not available. Finally, there is no recruitment of educational staff who have knowledge of the mother tongue of foreign pupils.

Another cause is that they are considered inappropriate and difficult. Obviously, since several teachers declared that they had not applied the above techniques, they would not have checked their suitability but would not be

familiar with them. Moreover, this finding is also related to the fact that much of the sample has less than 10 teaching years. Consequently, they may not have used them systematically in the classroom.

The lack of materials and the limited teaching time are also mentioned as causes, while one last difficulty was the teachers' inadequate knowledge of experiential participatory educational techniques. This finding is probably related to the fact that most of the sample has a service experience of 10 years or more and has not been trained in these techniques in recent years. In the bibliographic review, the material was tracked only from training conducted systematically and organized by the Ministry of Education in 2011 on issues of intercultural education, therefore a reflection is raised as to whether the participants had the opportunity to attend that training as active teachers or were still studying at the university.

Finally, it is necessary for teachers to be provided with the training. Regarding the content of the training, most of the sample highlighted some practical issues that it would like to follow concerning the implementation of experiential participatory educational techniques and/or their use in supporting foreign pupils during their Greek learning language. Given the young age of these teachers, it seems logical to want to train on more practical issues, as they are expected to work in classes for several years. In addition, the majority would like the training sessions to be held in venues where seminars can be held, probably by thinking that they will have the opportunity to apply the techniques to the teaching practice and due to the easier access to these venues due to the school position. Moreover, over 50% seems to trust teachers who have already applied the techniques to the teaching practice and have the experience of teaching them.

The positive attitude of the sample towards training can also be related to its positive perceptions of the effectiveness of experiential participatory educational techniques. Most of the sample highlighted their effectiveness in taking advantage of the particular characteristics of students in teaching. A large percentage thinks they can help them improve the quality of their teaching intervention, change their role, promote modern learning principles, meet the educational needs of their students, improve the effectiveness of their teaching intervention and achieve its teaching objectives. As was the case with the sample educators, many may be theoretically aware and/or willing to apply the above techniques, but they lack practical knowledge. In addition, the modernization of teacher knowledge in teaching, as well as technical and intercultural education, is imperative due to the widespread influx of migratory and refugee flows into our country in recent years.

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